

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999, as a whole, is beneficial to the national defense and will help us achieve our objectives in this important area.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 17, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 3616, approved October 17, was assigned Public Law No. 105-261.

**Statement on Signing the
Department of Defense
Appropriations Act, 1999**
October 17, 1998

Today I have signed into law H.R. 4103, the "Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1999."

Our military readiness must remain our top national security priority. This Act fully funds many of the Department's critical readiness programs and supports our commitments to a better quality of life for our military personnel and their families. I anticipate that the Congress shortly will act to include the emergency funds necessary for our ongoing participation in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia in a supplemental funding bill. I strongly urge them to do so. In addition, as I have said before, I believe we should examine near-term and long-term options to secure additional funds to address critical readiness shortfalls.

While the Act funds a number of modernization priorities, I have expressed my strong concerns that this legislation contains excessive funding for projects that are not currently needed for our Nation's defense at the expense of higher priority programs.

I am concerned about section 8115 of the Act, which forbids the obligation or expenditure of appropriated funds under this Act for any additional deployment of U.S. Armed Forces to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Albania, or Macedonia until after transmittal of a burdensome report to the Congress on the deployment. Consistent with the plain language of section 8115 and the intent of the Congress, I shall interpret it to apply only to the deployment of additional ground forces to one or

more of the three countries. Further, I shall interpret and implement section 8115 consistent with my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive, and not in a manner that would encumber my constitutional authority.

I will continue to work with the Congress on the appropriate level of long-term funding for defense in order to adequately address the Nation's security needs.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 17, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 4103, approved October 17, was assigned Public Law No. 105-262.

**Remarks on Departure for the Wye
River Middle East Peace Talks and
an Exchange With Reporters**
October 19, 1998

Terrorist Attack in Beersheba, Israel

The President. I want to begin by saying how much I deplore the grenade attack earlier today on a bus station in Beersheba, Israel. No cause, no grievance justifies terror. This is another attempt to murder, plain and simple.

Now I am convinced that reaching a secure, just, and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is the best way to ensure that terrorism has no future in the Middle East. I'm now returning to the Middle East peace talks to encourage the Israelis and the Palestinians to make the hard decisions necessary to move this peace process forward.

As I said when we launched the talks last week, the United States will do everything we can to help, but ultimately, only the parties themselves can bridge their differences and put their people on a more hopeful course. The issues are difficult. The distrust is deep. The going has been tough. But the parties must consider the consequences of failure, and also the benefits of progress.

Flash Floods in Texas

Finally, let me say just a few words about the flash flooding that has wreaked havoc in southeast Texas. Reportedly, 18 people have